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World YMCA - YWCA Celebrates 90th Week of Prayer


"Amid the bitter hatreds which persist between men and nations, there is no substitute for love. Governments may rely upon their political, economic and military resources; we may use all our intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, reason and power of persuasion, but without the power and love of God all our efforts are in vain."

In these words the Hon. Isabel Catto, World YWCA president, and the Hon. Charles Sherman, president of the World Alliance of YMCAs, jointly call the members of the two associations in over 70 countries to their 90th annual week of prayer, November 10-17, with the theme "God So Loved the World".

Their message, which appears as a preface to the recently issued photo booklet containing messages, prayers and Bible readings for the seven days, goes on to say that "this amazing love of God - revealed in the gift of Jesus Christ our Lord - forms the basis and theme of this 1957 YMCA-YWCA Week of Prayer and World Fellowship".

Short messages for meditation on successive days of the week have been compiled by groups of YM-YWCA members in the United Kingdom, Lebanon, the Belgian Congo, Pakistan, New Zealand, Uruguay and Canada and by Ukrainians living in Germany. Text and pictures are accompanied by short prayers and requests to intercede for the various continents in turn. The Scripture readings are based on the acts of God as revealed in the Gospel according to St. John.

The second half of this year's special publication, which has already appeared in English, French and German and will be translated into many other languages, contains a daily Bible reading plan for the year 1957-1958, with guiding citations from the Lord's Prayer for each month.



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During the week of prayer, churches in many parts of the world will be asked to hold special services alongside those held within the programmes of the associations. In Australia a special broadcast service on the morning of November 10 will be transmitted on Radio Australia and widely picked up by YMCA-YWCA members in Southeast Asia. E.P.S., Geneva

UNITED KINGDOMBishop of Chichester Calls for Contact between Church and Scientists

(London) - The need for closer contact between the Church and scientists was emphasised by the Bishop of Chichester, the Rt. Rev. G.K.A. Bell, when he addressed the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury this month.

He said there was a need for research and study by qualified church men and women, in cooperation with scientists and others, into the moral and spiritual significance of modern scientific discoveries.

"In the industrial field", he said, "automation is going to change the whole frame of things; psychology has found methods of manipulating men's minds and exercising almost unlimited power over them; physiologists have found methods of controlling the number and the bodily shape of human beings before they are born; and physicists envisage the day when we, on this planet, can make contact with other worlds."

Referring to atomic energy developments, Dr. Bell said that many members of the House must have met persons who were perplexed and puzzled. It is quite useless to say "the Church knows all the answers". Instead, he said, it is necessary for the Church to begin understanding what the problems are.

"The Church has to acknowledge ignorance over a wide field", the bishop continued. "I suggest that the Church, and by that I mean the Church authorities, must recognise that the most rewarding method is that of encounter, and the Church should make some plan or arrangement by which the moral philosopher, the pastoral theologian, may encounter the scientists and technologists."

"All this", concluded the bishop, "requires a new strategy and the providing of some place in which such encounters can take place, and in which research can be undertaken. This is beyond the resources of the parochial system as it now stands, but it is of very great importance." E.P.S., Geneva

UNITED STATESMinistry of Reconciliation for Little Rock

(Little Rock) - More than forty Little Rock clergymen - Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish - have initiated a ministry of reconciliation in their city, following the recent violence during the city's first efforts at school integration. Churches in Little Rock and throughout Arkansas were asked to hold special services on Columbus Day, October 12. At the services, prayers were offered for law and order, understanding and compassion.

President Eisenhower had appealed to Robert R. Brown, Protestant Episcopal bishop of the state, saying he hoped that "you and the ministers of Little Rock will be able not only to lead all the citizens of the city to disregard the incitements of agitators, but will join in the support of the law and preservation of our country and the institutions of the government under which it lives. And I could hope that your prayers would seek the power for all of us to cast out rancour and prejudice in favour of understanding and compassion."

White Citizens' Council Challenges Clergy

In another development in the racial situation in Little Rock, one thousand members of the White Citizens' Council challenged the fifteen Little Rock clergymen who condemned Governor Orval E. Faubus for his actions, to integrate their churches. "Thus with courage to match their convictions", the White Citizens' Council resolution said, "and a willingness to suffer for their principles, we feel this can be achieved as easily as the integration of our schools. Under this arrangement, the children would not be asked to accept a situation which the adults are unwilling to tolerate". The council added that if the ministers would integrate their churches, "this would greatly clarify a confused situation and help people to know what church to attend and support".

Billy Graham Urged to Postpone Visit

Billy Graham, who had offered to visit the city "if local churchmen believed it would help lessen racial tensions", has been urged by church leaders in Little Rock to postpone his visit "until the heated tensions have passed". Signers of the message to Dr. Graham included Congressman Brooks Hays of Arkansas, president of the Southern Baptist Convention. E.P.S., Geneva

CHINAProfessor Freytag's Impression of the Churches

Writing in the October issue of the "International Review of Missions", Professor Walter Freytag of Germany, who visited China last spring (see EPS No. 7), describes his meeting with Christians there, but points out that his visit was a "means of acquiring impressions" and that it could not "lead to a well-founded judgment of the new China".

"With only three weeks in China", writes Professor Freytag, who is professor of missions at Hamburg and chairman of the WCC's Division of Studies, "and seeing only the cities of Peking, Nanking, Shanghai, Hangchow and Canton, one cannot in honesty venture on a judgment on the total situation."

However, Dr. Freytag pointed out that he was impressed with the "look of the people" and "a new spirit of self-respect". Certain national evils like opium smoking, gambling and prostitution seem to have disappeared, he said.

"But none of these conditions affirms anything conclusive. Many of them, the possibility of freedom of speech for example, can disappear overnight. Much more important, in spite of all that at first sight seems like a change for the better, is the question of the price that had to be paid for it. It could well be that this price is higher than one expected... The most that can be said is that Communism in China has all the appearance of a strong force, indeed of a movement which has taken root in the nation itself and one which, in contrast to its position in other countries, is supported and upheld by wide sections of the population. How far it is spontaneous one cannot tell from a short visit."

Dr. Freytag writes that one sees "some splendid churches, recently built, and others which have been enlarged or restored, and each time one is informed that they have been paid for out of the sacrificial giving of the congregations. One sees people going to church and can confirm with one's own eyes, as I did, for example, in Shanghai, on an ordinary Sunday in six different churches and denominations, that from fifty to 120 per cent of the membership was present..."

There are clearly great opportunities for Christianity to make itself felt. It is amazing that the non-Roman Catholic Christians, who number some 700,000, have no less than 21 student secretaries at work; and the 15 principal and over one hundred other workers in the YMCA in Shanghai are a fact which must be noted just as the publication figures for Christian literature, which, in relation to the number of Christians, are much higher than in Germany."

Four main points stand out after discussions with Chinese Christians, Dr. Freytag says.

"Christians obviously want to destroy the picture of the Church in China which has been formed abroad, that it is a martyr church. But behind the defensive affirmations the strongest note of all is the sense of a need for unbroken community with those who, outside China, confess the Lord Christ.

"A second feature which was constantly revealed is a certain political judgment. For China, no other way has emerged than the one which it has followed, and it is unthinkable that they should give it up.

"The third thing which strikes one is that the Christians are clearly impressed with the moral strength of the Communist movement." There are undertones, Dr. Freytag says, and mistakes are readily admitted, "but nowhere does one find any fundamental criticism of the present system. Above all, those with whom I spoke never really discussed the period between 1949 and 1953... Thus there was one aspect of things on which they were silent. This was naturally distressing to a visitor, especially when he has the impression that it is not only an intentional silence, that a foreigner should to some extent understand, but rather, perhaps, a sub-conscious omission of something which cannot be admitted to be true."

Turning to the positive side, Dr. Freytag points out that "Christians know that they are clearly separated from the godlessness of Communism. They cannot at the same time be Party members and belong to the Church."

"The last thing which should be said is the simple fact that people know that they are called to bear witness to the Gospel in the world... One constantly sees Christians quite naturally saying grace before a meal in public. At conferences they recognise one another by chance as Christians."

Dr. Freytag discovered that adult baptism has increased more than in some churches in India and Indonesia. Asking why, he adds that "secondary motives do not arise. Anyone who becomes a Christian cuts himself off from the possibility of becoming a Party member and joins a minority which today is at best respectfully tolerated."

Summing up his visit, Dr. Freytag makes a plea to the West to "keep our fellowship with Christianity in China free from our political interests. We must refrain from setting ourselves up as judges. We must not isolate them. We must remain in touch with them as much as we can, even at the price of not being able to discuss with them all that we should like to discuss, but so that we know, and they can discern, that 'we live to the same Lord'." E.P.S., Geneva

Administrative Committee Meets October 8 - 9

Aid from the churches has been channelled to more than seven major disaster areas throughout the world during 1957 by the Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees, according to a report presented at the October 8 and 9 meeting of the Division's Administrative Committee in Geneva, Switzerland.

Help has been sent to Turkey following earthquakes last April; to Hong Kong after floods in May; to le Queyras, France, and to Italy following floods in June;

to the Philippine Islands after floods and fires in July; to Indonesia after floods in August and to West Pakistan following floods in September.

Just prior to the Administrative Committee, representatives of the churches in Europe and the Middle East met in Geneva to review the European Surplus Commodities Programme of the American churches and make recommendations to the Administrative Committee. The churchmen expressed their "appreciation of the generous provisions made by the American churches to finance this programme which has made possible an extensive and continuous ministry to human need in so many different lands". The consultation agreed that needs still exist in Europe and at the same time recognised the difficulties in a programme sponsored by governments, but asked that the programme be continued. Whereas Church World Service, USA, will take full responsibility for the programme, the Division of Inter-Church Aid will continue to survey needs and make recommendations to the United States churches concerning the programme and act as an advisory and consultative body.

The Administrative Committee reviewed the refugee situation, and learned that \$883,676 had been given by churches in thirty nations in response to last autumn's appeal for aid to Hungary and other Eastern European countries. At the same time, the committee was told that \$290,118 had been given in answer to a second appeal to aid Hungarian refugees and churches in Hungary and Poland. Projects have included the feeding centre in Vienna which still serves from 1,500 to 2,000 meals every day to refugees; emergency service along the border; providing text books for middle schools in Austria where unaccompanied children who left Hungary are studying; buying a home at Attersee, Austria, for boys, and another at Innsbruck for girls. In addition, a home at Badgastein has been rented and equipped and is being used as a girls' home, and between 60 and 75 boys have been placed in the Spittal Vocational Training School.

Fifteen Hungarian theological students who left Hungary have been provided with scholarships to continue their studies. The students are studying in Austria, Canada, the United States, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark and Australia. Dr. Leslie E. Cooke, director of the Division, commented that all the students have had provisions made for them. "It was not always possible to make the arrangements that they wanted, but they are able to continue their studies."

The committee welcomed new United States refugee legislation that provides for using more than 18,000 visas unissued after the termination of the Refugee Relief Act. The WCC's caseload will be about 5,000, Dr. Edgar H.S. Chandler, director of the Service to Refugees, told the committee. He added that the Council's refugee programme has a wide geographical and national spread and that "as the programme increases, the confidence of governmental organisations grows and in turn government groups are increasingly dependent upon us to carry out refugee work."

The appointment of two new staff members was announced at the committee meeting. Dr. Raymond Dudley will join the division on December 20 as staff consultant for countries outside Europe. Dr. Dudley, a member of the United Church of Christ, comes to the division from the Division of Foreign Missions of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Most recently he has been a corresponding secretary for the Foreign Department of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions of the Congregational Christian Churches. On January 1, Mr. B.C. Sjollemma of the Netherlands will join the Division for two years as secretary for the WCC-sponsored Migration Conference, scheduled for the spring of 1959. Mr. Sjollemma has been deputy director of the World Council's refugee operations in the Vienna area.

E.P.S., Geneva

UNITED KINGDOMBritish Catholic Peer Asks Freedom for Colombian Protestants

(London) - The Duke of Norfolk, Britain's leading peer and a Roman Catholic, has expressed the hope that Protestants in Colombia will receive "no less freedom and toleration than are enjoyed by Catholics in Great Britain and other democratic countries of the free world".

In a letter to Carlos Cardi, Colombian ambassador to Great Britain, the Duke expressed disquiet at reports of discriminations against Protestants in the South American country.

The ambassador, in reply, assured the Duke that the rights of religious minorities would be safeguarded as long as their activities do not threaten public order or morality. E.P.S., Geneva

COLOMBIAOfficial Clarifies Statement on Protestantism

(Bogota) - An official of the Colombian Ministry of the Interior has told newsmen that a recent circular sent to provincial authorities was not an outright order to restore freedom of assembly and worship to Protestant churches forced to close their doors because of local "difficulties".

Dr. Oscar Vergel Pacheco, secretary to Minister of the Interior Jose Maria Villareal, said the circular merely requested reports that would enable the government to make decisions restoring religious freedom to Protestant churches in places where this would not endanger public order.

At the time the circular was issued, in mid-September, Minister Villareal was reported to have directed provincial governors and local mayors to see to it that Protestant churches in various parts of the country, which had been hindered in their work or prevented from holding services because of local difficulties, be permitted to function.

Dr. Pacheco said the government's intention is to grant religious freedom to Protestants in accordance with the national constitution and the democratic pledges of the military junta that came to power in May. He said that the churches that are permitted to reopen will be limited to strictly private worship and forbidden to engage in proselytising activities. E.P.S., Geneva

GREECEOrthodox Set Up Department to Control Foreign Proselytisers

(Athens) - A special department "to observe and control the activities of foreign proselytisers" has been set up in Athens by the Orthodox Church in Greece. The new department is headed by Bishop Damaskinos of Marathon, auxiliary to Archbishop Theoclitos of Athens and All Greece.

The office will keep the Holy Synod informed on the number of adherents of non-Orthodox sects in Greece and report on all "acts of proselytism".

Commenting on the action, To Vima, Athens daily, said the aim is to "protect Orthodox people from the foreign propagandists who, unfortunately, have lately multiplied and widened their activities. The department faces the delicate task of controlling the activities of the foreign sects, while at the same time not clashing with the tolerance and freedom accorded to non-Orthodox churches by the constitutions of all liberal countries". E.P.S., Geneva

HUNGARYWCC Staff Member Visits Churches

Dr. Howard Schomer, secretary in the Division of Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the World Council of Churches, visited congregations, seminaries and church institutions throughout Hungary from October 1 to 7. The Reformed Church in Hungary and the recently reorganised Ecumenical Council of Protestant Churches in Hungary were his hosts for this detailed field trip which took him to Budapest, Tök, Baracska, Balatonfüröd, Berekfüröd, Debrecen, Sarospatak and Miskolc. Dr. Schomer preached to overflowing crowds on October 6 at services at the Calvin Square Church of Budapest and in the rural church in Tök. He was able to meet with representative groups from the several Hungarian member churches of the World Council.

Parishioners and church leaders all over Hungary expressed their appreciation for the substantial aid received from Christians abroad during the past year. Clothing from the last shipments to arrive before the expiration of the International Red Cross permit on June 30 is now being distributed to the most needy. The government customs authorities and the national factories are making it possible for World Council, CROP and HEKS to provide Hungarian church institutions and parsonages with raw cotton, made up in the country into bed linen and under-clothing. The government has also authorised the churches to import India paper and to begin publishing 200,000 hymnals and 100,000 Bibles. The World Council is providing the paper for the hymnals and joining with the United Bible Societies to provide the paper for the Bibles.

Cash aid, authorised by the government, has permitted the World Council, in cooperation with the World Reformed Alliance and Lutheran World Service, to furnish the household of every Protestant pastor, lay church worker and retired church employee in Hungary - a total of more than 3,700 homes - with a special emergency relief grant amounting to approximately one month's salary of pension. Cash transfers are also enabling more than a hundred pastors to obtain motorcycles. Cash assistance for basic repairs and equipment is now reaching some of the 36 Protestant welfare institutions, most of which care for the aged and the handicapped. More than 20 churches and several conference centres and rest homes are among the other buildings needing cash aid for reconstruction.

E.P.S., Geneva

GERMANYCatholic-Protestant Dispute over Church Building

A dispute has arisen in the town of Altenberg, near Cologne, over use of the Cathedral, which was restored about a hundred years ago by King Frederick William III of Prussia on condition that it should serve as a parish church for both Protestants and Catholics in the town.

The Roman Catholic office of the Vicar-General in Cologne now proposes to go beyond the previous understanding and establish an abbey of Cistercian monks in the building.

The local Protestant congregation has complained that the Roman Catholic plan violates the agreement and disturbs "confessional peace" in Germany. They have been supported by the late Dr. Heinrich Held, former president of the Church of the Rhineland. Another protest was registered by Bishop Otto Dibelius of Berlin, who expressed the hope that "the sharing of the Cathedral by both great Christian confessions" would "remain a symbol of our common responsibility for the religious life of our people".

A legal opinion sought by the Protestants says that use of the Cathedral as an Abbey is "an infringement of its legal and interconfessional status". The Office of the Vicar-General maintains that the Cathedral "has always been a Catholic building, and the King of Prussia merely granted the Protestants permission to share to a certain extent in its use".

Answering a question in the parliament of North-Rhine/Westphalia, the minister for religious affairs in the province said that the authorities had tried to persuade the Roman Catholic Church to abandon its "untenable attitude", but so far without success.

E.P.S., Geneva

SWEDEN

Convocation Bars Ordination of Women

(Stockholm) - The biennial Convocation of the State Lutheran Church of Sweden has voted 62 to 36 against a proposal that would have allowed women to be ordained as pastors. The Convocation's action automatically killed a government-sponsored bill introduced in parliament to permit women to be ordained

The Convocation ruled against the proposal after having turned down several compromise suggestions. Bishop Helge Ljungberg of Stockholm argued that even if there were no objections to women ministers on Biblical grounds, the time was not ripe for this step. He was supported by Bishop Bo Giertz of Gothenburg who urged the delegates to "think what the world outside will say. If the 60 million Lutherans in the United States, Germany and England thought that women should be ordained they would have done it long ago."

Before the final vote was taken, Ester Lutteman, one of Sweden's most prominent churchwomen, announced that she was resigning from the State Lutheran Church because of its "negative attitude", especially toward the ordination of women as pastors. "The Church has become institutional, ceremonial and exceptionally masculine", she said. "There is no real interest inside the church for women." Miss Lutteman, 69, has been one of the most popular lay preachers in the country, and in 1927 she became the first woman in the country permitted to preach in Uppsala Cathedral.

Commenting on the ordination of women, Archbishop Yngve Brilioth said that "I do not consider it out of the question that the Swedish Church may one day open the priesthood to women, but I think that the time for such a step has not yet come." Archbishop Brilioth said he was not convinced that there is scriptural evidence against women becoming priests, but that in view of the resistance within the church he felt the assembly should not "contribute to the risk of a explosion".

The Stockholm "News", reviewing the situation, pointed out that the ordination of women is not only a theological question and a question within the church, but a human question of conscience and of justice. Either discrimination of race or sex can be defended on its own merits, or the Swedish church synod becomes very much like South Africa and Little Rock, the paper said.

Commented the New Wermlands "News": "It must be noted that the church's warmest friends are standing outside the church, and it is our concern to reach them. Can one close one's heart to them as the Swedish synod did?"

E.P.S., Geneva

